

<p>WorkFirst Customized Community Initiative 2004-2005</p>
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Name of Sponsoring LPA: Thurston County

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**WORKFIRST TEEN PARENT
CUSTOMIZED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE – 2004-2005**

The Thurston County local LPA is collaborating with the Choice for Change (C4C) Project, a collaboration of South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC), the North Thurston Public Schools (NTPS) and Community Youth Services' Workforce Investment Youth Program (CYS/WIA). This collaboration will leverage funds from North Thurston Public Schools and the federal Workforce Investment Act. WorkFirst Teen Parents enrolled in this program have access to support services through WIA, which may include: tuition and books, bus passes, child care, food, rental assistance, clothing, vocational training equipment, etc.

C4C has expanded the General Education Development (GED) diploma program offered through CYS/C4C to include the opportunity for TANF teen parents to obtain their GED and vocational certificates at SPSCC. C4C targets youth under the age of 21 and of all ethnic backgrounds who are motivated to increase their education and work skill levels.

The purpose of the CYS/WIA programs is to help youth develop and improve overall "employability", that is complete their education, develop a plan for post secondary training, and offer the job skills necessary to find and keep a job.

While there are GED preparation classes in the community, academic support stops once the GED is obtained. Lack of a strong academic foundation, along with social and situational barriers often proves too overwhelming to overcome for many teen parents. This innovative project provides assistance to overcome barriers through guidance and access to instructional programs that will lead to completing a GED, and enrollment and completion of a vocational certificate from South Puget Sound Community College.

The C4C curriculum includes reading, writing, and math classes, GED preparation course work, college placement readiness, computer literacy labs, career development, life skills and intensive academic tutoring. Once a student obtains a GED, they will participate in college preparation training until they are able to test and pass the college placement exam.

Throughout the program the WorkFirst Teen Parents will participate in career assessment and job readiness classes. CYS case managers will work with the college to facilitate enrollment in the appropriate technical programs. Students are mandated to be in college classes, tutoring or job readiness activities 32 hours a week.

Case managers from the federal WIA Youth program will work with WorkFirst case managers to share tracking information for the TANF clients on the following performance measures. 1) High School Diploma or Equivalent Attainment rate, 2) Work Readiness skills, and 3) Enrollment in Post High School vocational program and/or obtain a vocational certificate. In addition, the CYS case managers will: a) monitor progress in school and communicate this to the DSHS case manager each month, b) notify the case manager if the client is not maintaining satisfactory progress so the Individual Responsibility Plan can be revised, and c) refer the client to ESD staff for job placement before the end of training. The WorkFirst case manager will document the above in EJAS.

Once a participant has attained a Post High School vocational certificate (one year of a vocational degree) s/he will be referred by the WorkFirst case manager to Job Search and success in becoming employed within 90 days of beginning Job Search will be tracked by ESD.

This program will benefit the participants by helping them gain a TANF approved vocational certificate that will lead to higher paying jobs and long term sustainability. The community benefits from this program by reducing the impact on local assistance programs.

The Thurston County LPA is requesting that TANF Teen Parents participating in the C4C, after obtaining a GED, and while enrolled in a SPSCC vocational course for up to one year be considered participating full time in a WorkFirst activity.

The population the project will serve: teen parents ages 16 through 20, roughly 8% of the TANF caseload. This project plans to serve up to 10 clients in PY04-05.

The impact on the rest of the TANF caseload is a minimal decrease in the number of WorkFirst participants referred to job search after completion of a GED. This will minimally impact the number of JS to employment within 90 days statistics. Employment Security will track Job Search enrollment and employment within 90 days of beginning Job Search for those youth who enroll in Job Search after obtaining a vocational certificate.